

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4304
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL GENOA
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMCONSUL PALERMO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
DIA WASHDC
SHAPEUSNR
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER
USDOCOSOUTH
USMISSION USNATO

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USDOCOSOUTH FOR INTAF
SHAPEUSNR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT,IT
SUBJ: PERTINI: THE PRESIDENT

1. DESPITE THE IRONY OF BEING THE MAN WHOM NONE
OF THE COUNTRY'S POLITICAL LEADERS WANTED
AS PRESIDENT, ALESSANDRO PERTINI ENTERS THE QUIRINALE
IN A POSITION OF SOLID STRENGTH--BOTH AS A SYMBOL
AND AS THE COUNTRY'S FORMAL LEADER. COMING AFTER
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GIOVANNI LEONE AND A SERIES OF CORRUPTION SCANDALS
STRETCHING OVER YEARS AND INVOLVING HIGH POLITICAL
FIGURES, PERTINI WILL INEVITABLY DO MUCH TO IMPORVE
THE WOUNDED PRESTIGE OF THE ITALIAN PRESIDENCY.
AS A SYMBOL OF PERSONAL INTEGRITY AND INCORRUPTI-
BILITY, PERTINI WILL HELP RESTORE THE PUBLIC SELF-
RESPECT OF THE ITALIAN PEOPLE. AS MAN OF THE LEFT,

AS A MAN FROM OUTSIDE THE POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT, PERTINI REPRESENTS SOMETHING NEW IN THE PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC, A GREAT PARADOX IN VIEW OF HIS AGE. PERTINI, THE SYMBOL, WILL BE ALL TO THE GOOD, A DESPERATELY NEEDED IMPROVEMENT IN THE COUNTRY'S PUBLIC LIFE. HAVING RECEIVED THE GREATEST MAJORITY OF ANY OF ITALY'S SEVEN PRESIDENTS AND HAVING BEEN ENDORSED BY VIRTUALLY THE ENTIRE PRESS, PERTINI HAS A BASIS ON WHICH TO BUILD A AREA OF AUTHORITY AND INFLUENCE FOR THE PRESIDENCY GREATER THAN HIS PREDECESSORS ENJOYED.

2. THERE IS MUCH UNCERTAINTY ABOUT HOW PERTINI WILL HANDLE HIMSELF AS PRESIDENT. NEVER HAVING BEEN IN THE THICK OF POLITICS, PERTINI IS, IF NOT AN UNKNOWN QUANTITY, AN UNPREDICTABLE QUANTITY. HIS SOLE "EXECUTIVE" EXPERIENCE WAS HIS 8 YEARS AS PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER. THIS PERIOD IS A GOOD AUGURY. BY ALL ACCOUNTS PERTINI COMPORTED HIMSELF WELL, WAS NON-PARTISAN AND FAIR AND WAS WELL-LIKED ACROSS THE CHAMBER FLOOR. HE NEVER ATTEMPTED TO ASSERT FOR HIMSELF AN ACTIVE POLITICAL ROLE.

3. WHILE THERE ARE SOME WHO BELIEVE PERTINI WILL TRY TO BE A STRONG AND INDEPENDENT PRESIDENT, MOST OF CONFIDENTIAL

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THE EMBASSY'S CONTACTS ARE CONVINCED THAT PERTINI WILL NOT BE AN ACTIVIST PRESIDENT AND WILL NOT SEEK TO MAKE THE PRESIDENCY MORE THAN IT HAS BEEN IN THE PAST-- THAT IS TO SAY LARGELY CEREMONIAL AND CLEARLY SUBORDINATE IN ALL MATTERS TO THE POLITICAL PARTIES, SPECIFICALLY THE MAJORITY CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. "HE WILL NOT FORCE MATTERS; HE WILL BE PASSIVE RATHER THAN ACTIVE"--IS ROUGHLY HOW TWO CONTACTS SUMMED UP THEIR EXPECTATIONS.

4. BUT ITALIAN POLITICS ARE IN A PERIOD OF UNPRECEDENTED DELICACY AND FLUX. THE ROLE OF THE PRESIDENT IN THE COMING SEVEN YEARS WILL BE MORE DIFFICULT THAN IN THE PAST. PERTINI MAY NOT BE ABLE TO BE PASSIVE, EVEN IF HE WISHES. WE ASKED PIETRO LONGO HOW HE THOUGHT PERTINI WOULD ACT AT A TIME OF CRISIS, WHOM HE WOULD TURN TO FOR ADVICE. LONGO'S REPLY WAS AS FOLLOWS. "PERTINI WILL LISTEN TO THE PARTIES. HE WILL SEEK THE ADVICE OF THOSE POLITICIANS IN WHOM HE HAS CONFIDENCE. IN THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY THESE ARE ANDREOTTI AND PICCOLI; IN THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY, SARAGAT AND LONGO HIMSELF; IN THE COMMUNIST PARTY,

AMENDOLA; AND IN THE SOCIALIST PARTY, MANCINI. HE WILL FOLLOW THE CONSENSUS OF THE ADVICE THAT THEY GIVE. HE WILL NOT PRESS HIS OWN VIEWS." ASKED IF PERTINI MIGHT FAVOR THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE AT SOME JUNCTURE, LONGO REPLIED, "PERTINI HAS NOT BEEN IN FAVOR OF THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE; HOWEVER, IF THE PARTIES WERE TO RECOMMEND THE INCLUSION OF COMMUNISTS IN THE CABINET, HE WOULD ACCEPT THEIR ADVICE." LONGO'S ANSWER DOES NOT MAKE CLEAR WHAT MAY HAPPEN IF THE PARTIES THEMSELVES DISAGREE.

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5. OF THE PRESIDENT'S SIX ESSENTIAL POWERS (THE RIGHT TO DISSOLVE ONE OR BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT, THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE THE PRIME MINISTER, THE RIGHT TO REFUSE THREE TIMES TO SIGN A LAW, THE RIGHT TO NOMINATE JUDGES TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT, THE RIGHT TO SIGN TREATIES AND THE RIGHT TO MAKE STATEMENTS TO THE PARLIAMENT

AND PUBLIC), DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT IS CONSIDERED
THE MOST IMPORTANT. IN HIS 1970 MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR
MARIN, PERTINI TALKED OF THE DELICACY OF THIS ISSUE
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AND SAID THAT THOUGH IT MIGHT BE ARGUED THAT THE
PRESIDENT WAS NOT BOUND TO TAKE THE ADVICE OF THE
PRESIDENTS OF THE TWO CHAMBERS, HE COULD NOT
DISREGARD THEIR VIEWS. PERTINI'S STATEMENT
STILL LEAVED OPEN THE QUESTION OF WHAT HE WOULD
DO IN THE CURRENT SITUATION WHERE, WITH FANFANI
AS PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AND INGRAU AS
PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER, THE PRESIDENT COULD
EASILY RECEIVE CONFLICTING ADVICE.

6. OUR CONTACTS HAVE EXPRESSED TWO CONCERNS
ABOUT PERTINI'S PRESIDENCY. ONE IS HIS AGE. AT
THE MOMENT PERTINI'S SHYSICAL HEALTH IS GOOD. BUT
ON SEPTEMBER 25 HE WILL BE 82 AND THE TERM OF THE
PRESIDENCY IS SEVEN YEARS. THERE IS CONCERN THAT PERTINI
WILL AGE FAST IN THIS PERIOD. THE SECOND CONCERNS
RELATES TO PERTINI'S STUBBORNNESS AND EMOTIONAL
IRASCIBILITY--"A LETHAL COMBINATION"--AS ACQUAVIVA
SIAD. IN HIS 1973 INTERVIEW WITH FALLACI, PERTINI
HIMSELF EXPRESSED DOUBT THAT HE WAS THE SORT OF
PERSON WHO WOULD BE COMFORTABLE AS PRESIDENT OR WHO
WOULD MAKE A SUITABLE CHIEF OF STATE. "I JUST
WOULD NOT FEEL I COULD SEND TELEGRAMS TO CERTAIN
HEADS OF STATE. I WOULD NOT FEEL I COULD SHAKE
THEIR HANDS. WHEN I WAS PRESIDENT OF THE CHAMBER
I REFUSED TO RECEIVE THE PRESIDENT OF SOUTH AFRICA,
THE GREEK AMBASSADOR, THE SPANISH AMBASSADOR,
THE PORTUGUESE AMBASSADOR. AT THE QUIRNALE I
WOULD BE CONSTRAINED TO DO THESE THINGS. OTHERWISE
WE WOULD HAVE TO BREAK DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS... IF
I WERE PRESIDENT, I WOULD HAVE TO FOLLOW MY CONSCIENCE
AND, IF THEY TRIED TO FORCE ME TO DO SOMETHING OF
WHICH I WAS NOT CONVINCED, I WOULD LEAVE. RESIGN.
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RIGHT AWAY."

7. OUR CONTACTS EXPRESSED GREAT SATISFACTION THAT
ANTONIO MACCANICO IS TO BECOME HEAD OF THE PRESIDENT'S
OFFICE. MACCANICO, ALTHOUGH HE WAS A COMMUNIST UNTIL
1956, IS NOW A REPUBLICAN WHO ENJOYS GREAT RESPECT

AMONG THE OTHER PARTIES FOR HIS ABILITY AND NONPARTISANSHIP. HE IS EXPECTED TO BE A GOOD INFLUENCE ON PERTINI AND A GOOD MANAGER OF THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE.

8. PERTINI HAS BEEN HIGHLY CRITICAL OF AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY AND HE CAN PROBABLY BE DESCRIBED AS DISTRUSTFUL OF THE UNITED STATES. HOWEVER, TO SOME EXTENT THE ROOT CAUSES OF THIS COOLNESS TOWARD THE UNITED STATES--ITS ROLE IN LATIN AMERICA AND VIETNAM--ARE THINGS OF THE PAST. PRESIDENT CARTER'S HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY AND ARMS CONTROL INITIATIVES THE PANAMA CANAL TREATY, AMERICAN NON-INTERVENTION IN AFRICA, OUR CONCERN WITH FOOD PRODUCTION AND BASIC HUMAN NEEDS IN THE THIRD WORLD AND THE INVESTIGATIONS AND CONTROLS ON CIA ARE ALL BOUND TO HAVE SOME APPEAL TO HIM. IN THE JUDGEMENT OF PIERTO LONGO, HIMSELF A STRONG FRIEND OF THE UNITED STATES, PERTINI'S DISTRUST OF THE UNITED STATES CAN BE LARGELY OVERCOME IF HE IS CAREFULLY CULTIVATED. ACCORDING TO LONGO, PERTINI IS HIGHLY SENSITIVE TO THE WAY HE IS TREATED AND RECEPTIVE TO ANY COURTESY SHOWN TO HIM. LONGO'S ADVICE WAS, "THE SOONER PERTINI IS INVITED TO THE UNITED STATES, THE BETTER." GARDNER

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